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FM AMEMBASSY BEIJING
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C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIJING 000354

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/31/2028

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SUBJECT: MFA SAYS BURMA MAKING PROGRESS ON DEMOCRACY;
REGIME RELUCTANT TO RECEIVE GAMbari

REF: BEIJING 278

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Aubrey Carlson. Reasons 1.4
(b/d).

¶1. (C) Summary: In China's view, the Burmese Government is progressing on the democratic process and in dialogue with Aung San Suu Kyi, MFA Asia Department Deputy Director General Yang Yanyi told PolMinCouns January 30 during an official readout of the January 20-21 visit to China of Burmese Special Envoy U Maung Myint. However, Burma "has a problem" with another visit by UN Special Advisor Gambari, Yang said. Welcoming China's efforts to hasten Gambari's visit to Burma, PolMinCouns countered Yang's positive assessment on Burma. PolMinCouns pointed out the lack of progress in the dialogue between the Burmese Government and Aung San Suu Kyi and cited the recent charging of democracy activists for peaceful activities as evidence of the worsening political situation in Burma. End Summary.

¶2. (C) As promised during a January 25 informal readout with Burma Division Deputy Director Chen Chen, Asia Department Deputy Director General Yang Yanyi provided PolMinCouns on January 30 an official readout of the January 20-21 visit of Burmese Special Envoy U Maung Myint. Yang's readout tracked with information previously provided by Deputy Director Chen (reftel), but added detail on Burmese arguments against a Gambari visit anytime soon.

China Sees "Progress" on Democracy and Dialogue

¶3. (C) Yang provided the readout "per instruction" and with the request that we keep the information confidential. The Chinese side does not want to see this information become public, she said. After discussing U Maung Myint's statements on the Burmese Government's so-called "roadmap" to democracy, the draft of the constitution, and the fourth round of talks between the Burmese Government and Aung San Suu Kyi, Yang said China's view is that the Burmese Government is "taking positive steps in the democratic process and in dialogue with Aung San Suu Kyi."

Burma has "Problem" with Gambari Visit

¶4. (C) Despite the signs of progress, Yang said, the Burmese Government "has a problem" with another visit of UN Special Advisor Gambari. Yang reported that U Maung Myint said the Burmese Government prefers a visit only as early as April because:

-- The Burmese Government "tries its best" to be responsive to Gambari's requests for activities, but Gambari's proposals

are time-consuming and complicated to address.

-- "Much to the regret" of the Burmese Government, each Gambari visit results in increased pressure from the UN and the international community; still, the Burmese Government respects the UN Secretary-General's efforts and will continue to cooperate.

-- The April timeframe will allow the Burmese Government sufficient time to prepare and allow the visit to have a substantive outcome.

-- The schedule of Burmese Government senior leaders is "fully packed" until April.

The Chinese "tried to convince" the Burmese to reconsider the date of a Gambari visit, Yang said. U Maung Myint said that Burma would seriously consider the Chinese suggestions.

¶ 15. (C) PolMinCouns welcomed China's urging of Burma to reconsider the date of Gambari's visit, stressing that the sooner Gambari visits the better. PolMinCouns took issue with Yang's assessment of positive progress on democracy and the dialogue with Aung San Suu Kyi, pointing out that to date the dialogue had resulted in no progress toward national reconciliation or democracy. The continued house arrest of Aung San Suu Kyi and limits on her ability to consult with her colleagues show the regime has no interest in making the dialogue meaningful or successful. PolMinCouns pointed out that the regime's recent decision to charge ten pro-democracy activists for the peaceful expression of their beliefs shows that not only is the regime not making progress but is actually moving in a negative direction.

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